

I Would Like To Rage by DragonBandit

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Summary:

There's no Zoomers in Dungeons and Dragons.

Max finds her niche anyway.

I Would Like To Rage

1)

A week after everything, Mike corners Max by her locker. Weird, because she's basically part of the gang now and he doesn't need to act like some idiot when he wants to get her attention. But also it's Mike so Max isn't that surprised.

"What?"

Mike shuffles. "Look I'm--sorry."

"Okay," Max says. "Didn't we already have this talk?"

"Um, yeah. I just--I thought I should make this official." He holds out his hand, in a fist, and stares at Max until she finally understands what he wants out of her and holds out her own hand. She raises an eyebrow, there is nerdy, and then there is this inept at being a normal human being.

Mike drops something into it. "So, yeah," he says, "If you want we're thinking of making a new campaign now that Will's feeling better and you're a member of the party too. There's not really a zoomer class but you can pick something else. Or I can make one, I guess."

Max examines the bright red dice she's been gifted. It's weird, she's never seen a dice with twenty sides before. She understands about half the words Mike is saying.

"We're playing this Saturday. My house. You're invited. If you want to play anyway."

"Sure," Max says. Her mom is pushing her to make more friends now that Billy isn't the be-all and end-all of her social life. She has no idea what game Mike is talking about, but it's not like she has anything better to do since Lucas and Dustin still can't beat her score on Dig-Dug.

2)

Boys are stupid. So are girls, but at least they're smarter about it. Max seethes with rage every time the bullies in class mutter under their breaths about "dead boy" or "nerds" in earshot of her. Her friends walk as a pack these days so earshot of Max is earshot of the party, which is earshot of Will.

"Why don't you ever say something back?" She asks them all one day, throwing her arms up as the rest of them curl in on themselves after another trying encounter with the boys that El calls "mouth breathers".

"That just gets us in more trouble," Dustin says, "They're stronger than we are."

"That is untrue," Lucas hisses, "Dude you can't just say that."

"Why not?"

"Because it makes us look bad!"

"Uh, we already look bad," Dustin retorts. He holds his hands back and backs away from Lucas. "If you hadn't already noticed we're getting chewed out by a girl because we can't stand up for ourselves!"

In the background the two of them scuffle. Max rolls her eyes and looks askance and Mike, who is ignoring her in favour of delving through a notebook only he is allowed to touch, and Will who is doing his best to smile at her reassuringly.

"Guess we're all just used to it," Will says.

"You shouldn't be," Max snipes. Will curls in on himself and Max groans inwardly. "Sorry," She says.

"I know you don't mean it," Will says. They talk about something

safer: The mixtapes Jonathan makes for Will who passes them to Max who listens to them on repeat to drown out the screaming of her mom, step-dad and brother.

3)

She's just so angry. All the time, even when she's trying not to be, it bubbles under her skin and behind her teeth until she just has to get *it out* .

Until she's screaming at Lucas for touching her things, and at Dustin for making that stupid noise, and at everyone because it's not fair, it's not fair, why does she have to be the one who feels this way, it's not.

Fucking.

Fair.

The rest of the party is scared when that happens, she can see it in the way they keep handing her quarters for Dig-Dug and TRON at the arcade later. In the way Lucas pays for her to have an extra scoop of ice cream after school when it's still hot enough to want it.

It's kind of nice, Max guesses, if nice is being able to blow up without having an argument.

4)

But sometimes she wants the argument and her friends are nerds. Nerd supreme. Nerd with a side of dork and bullied. She just feels bad yelling at them.

One of the mouthbreathers tells Will to go back into his grave at recess and Max just fucking snaps.

“What did you say?” She’s learned this from Nancy--you start quiet and deadly.

The mouthbreather looks at her, and kind of, tries to puff himself up. “You’re seriously defending the deadboy?”

“Yeah.” Max walks forwards. She stands in front of Will. Her temper rises. “You going to apologise?”

“Why should I? He’s a fucking weirdo deadboy.”

Max pounces.

She goes home with a black eye, a paper slip telling her she has detention and Mike’s undying loyalty. Not Will’s, because he’s too shy to actually tell anyone that the names were even bothering him. Or maybe he just wants to impress the rest of the party before they call him a sissy. Like they don’t already know his heart is made out of marshmallows and rainbows.

“You should have shown them what you did to your asshole brother,” Dustin declares. “No one would ever mess with you then.”

Max grins at him, the split on her lip stings.

Her Mom is less impressed. “Young ladies don’t get into fights with boys twice their size Maxine Mayfield!”

But she isn’t grounded so like, who really gives a shit.

5)

Mike’s basement is a lot nicer than Max’s. In her house the basement is just for her step-dad and smells faintly like beer and grossness. In Mike’s there’s a rug, and posters on the walls, and a table that all the party can fit around with some squeezing. El is there too, snuck in when Mike’s mom talked to Hopper about boring grown-up things. Max smiles at her.

They're friends now. El is blunt and says what she means. Also she can make soda cans explode and that's just badass.

"There'd be more room if you let someone sit next to you," Max says to Mike.

"Yeah but then you'd see behind the screen and that ruins the game."

"What screen?"

"For dungeons and dragons," Mike says.

El repeats it as a question. The male members of the party grin. Then they all start talking at once, like idiots.

"It's this totally cool roleplaying game--"

"You roll dice to see what you do--"

"And beat up monsters and save girls, well I guess guys for you---"

"We all work together to defeat evil from the world--"

"Mike is all the bad guys so he has to sit in front of a screen that takes up half the table--"

"Mike you should make your dad build a better table--"

"My dad doesn't build things--"

"Oh and you get really awesome loot and there's magic, El you should totally make a Sorcerer. Then you can do what you do in real life what you do in the game--"

"I told you there's no zoomer class but maybe--"

"You know most people get told to pick sorcerer so they can have the powers they want in real life, not the ones you already do."

"Yeah I guess so. Maybe it would be boring to play something you already can do. El you should be like a Thief or a Fighter they don't get any magic at all."

“Just no one pick a ranger, that’s my class”

“And there’s different races and it’s so totally cool and--”

“Stop!” El yells. The lights don’t flicker but all of them look up anyway.

“Oops,” Dustin says. “How about you look through the rule book and see if you like it?”

Max snorts, “Nerds,” she accuses. “Who reads for fun?”

“Uh, we do. The nerds you voluntarily hang out with. So who’s the real nerd here?” Dustin says.

“You,” Max answers, “Mr, kiss-ass Mr Clarke until you can taste his ball-sack.”

“That is GROSS. So are you gonna play or not?”

Max shrugs, “I’m already here aren’t I?” She doesn’t have enough quarters to declare she’s going to the arcade instead. And also, she’s kind of interested, not that she’ll ever let them know that for real.

Together she and El flip through the yellowed pages, El’s reading Mike’s, Max has Lucas’s. The three boys are poring over another together and talking about party balance. Mike is setting up his screen, and grinning.

Max flips through, not really reading anything, just looking at the pictures. It’s not a thick book, but there’s a lot of numbers and math. Not very interesting and hard to focus on when there’s already an argument brewing in team ‘been there done that’.

It kind of looks dumb. Cleric’s are boring, fighters don’t get anything cool, Dustin and Lucas won’t let anyone else pick Ranger or Bard, and magic has too many number for Max to want to deal with it... she keeps flicking through. There aren’t enough girls in this book.

Eventually the book lands on something different. It’s a woman, short, with an axe slung over one shoulder and someone’s head held in her other hand. She has white hair, which means it would

probably be blonde if the book wasn't in black and white, but Max sees it as red.

“Unbridled, unquenching, unthinking fury. More than a mere emotion, their anger is the ferocity of a cornered predator, the unrelenting assault of a storm, the churning turmoil of the sea.”

The anger that always sits below Max's skin perks up at that.

She looks up at the boys and El, she's the last one to pick a class.

“I got it,” she says. “I'm a Barbarian.”

Author's Note:

So the version of DnD made in 1983 doesn't really have a playable Barbarian class (I think, look there are a LOT of DnD editions, I just reskinned 5E because that's the one that's familiar to me.)

Title from Critical Role's Grog

Quotation at the end taken straight for the Dungeons and Dragons 5E Players Handbook for Barbarians. The picture however is completely made up.

This fic was born from me and my friend, watching separately, both had the same thought when Max threatened her brother with the baseball bat.